

Protests: GAC Update

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GAC Protests Update

Top Level

1. GAC keeping a close eye on situation in the US and around the world through our network of missions, and sharing of relevant reporting from missions with PCO (F&DP and IAS).
2. Eyes on amplification of these protests around the world (incl. this PM's Superbowl), and the impact on image/reputation of Canada as a trading partner (supply chains) and on our perceived ability to respond and address the situation.

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Latest developments:

- US Ambassador Cohen raised the protests with MINA on Friday afternoon, in the context of a secure call/démarches. **s.38**
- PMO's public readout of Friday PM-POTUS call referred explicitly to American "influence" and "financial support", and pointed to the flooding of the Ottawa 911 lines originating from the U.S. (Pasted below.)
- The U.S. -- and we -- are watching closely the U.S. copycat protests and caravan and today's Superbowl (LA, 1830 ET).



- For example, 300 protesters (100 vehicles) gathered near the Peace Bridge on the US side in Buffalo on Saturday (no major disruption reported).
- Anecdotal: Seeing growing number of US flags in Ottawa and Windsor protests.



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Roll-Up of Ministerial and Senior Engagements

- PM-POTUS Friday.
- TC Omar Alghabra -- DoT Pete Buttigieg (Thursday)
- PS Marco Mendicino -- DHS Alejandro Mayorkas (Friday)
- NSIA Jody Thomas -- Homeland Security Advisor Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall

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Relevant Statements by:

- Gretchen Whitmer (Michigan Governor): "We are pushing the Canadian Government to resolve this swiftly and safely." (11 Feb.)
- Teamsters Union President Jim Hoffa "denouncing" the convoy (Feb.10)

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks with the President of the United States of America Joe Biden

PMO -- February 11, 2022 Ottawa, Ontario

Today, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke with the President of the United States of America, Joe Biden, to discuss the ongoing illegal blockades taking place across Canada, which are threatening trade, jobs, the economy, and communities on both sides of the border.

The two leaders discussed the critical importance of resolving access to the Ambassador Bridge and other ports of entry as quickly as possible, given their role as vital bilateral trade corridors and how essential they are to the extensive interconnections between our two countries – and our peoples.

The Prime Minister underlined the coordination taking place between all orders of government in Canada in responding to these challenges, as well as between relevant authorities in Canada and the United States. The leaders agreed to continue closely coordinating bilateral efforts to ensure our respective authorities have all of the tools and information required to bring these illegal actions to an end as quickly as possible.

The Prime Minister and President discussed the American and global influence on the protests, including financial support. The Prime Minister expressed concern that the flooding of Ottawa's 911 phone lines yesterday originated in the United States.

The two leaders agreed to stay in close touch.

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Reporting from our network

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LDN HOM (Feb 13)

\~Hello from LDN:

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While the Russia/Ukraine crisis and the political tribulations of Boris Johnson continue to dominate British news, the convoy protests in Canada are getting some minor attention. And the topic is being raised marginally in contacts with counterparts from other countries in London.

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Two themes: Disbelief that this is happening in Canada of all places, and no one wants this to become an unwelcome Canadian export as the protests spread elsewhere.

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The phenomenon reflects worldwide weariness with the burdens imposed by COVID. Two years is a long time. NOTE - After the first long dark COVID winter, the Johnson government has generally been on the side of opening things up as quickly as possible. And vaccination rates in the U.K. have always been near the best.

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There have been two small, brief anti-lockdown, "pro-trucker" demonstrations near Canada House in London. There was also a noisy protest outside Parliament, during which some Canadian flags were in evidence, which morphed into an anti-Starmer event when the Leader of the Opposition happened by. LDN was quickly in touch with his office and were assured that Sir Keir was fine and had no concerns about Canada.

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A troubling dimension of these protests is when more militant alt-right, extremist, racist, misogynist, anarchist, and other hate groups latch onto the anti-lockdown protesters. This has tended to happen in all the "convoy" type of events.

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A critical question is to what extent are the protests in Canada reflecting legitimate homegrown concern about the impacts of prolonged lockdowns, and how much of this activity is actually organised, animated, directed and financed by alt-right insurrectionists from the US. The disruptive events in Ottawa seem to have been extensively and meticulously pre-organised.

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Two consequences need to be watched very carefully - the negative economic and reputational impacts from trade disruptions, and the possible impression that Canadian police, security and intelligence systems are incapable of responding effectively to blatant, large-scale, illegal conduct.

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Ralph G.

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MDRID (Feb 11): Print and broadcast media in Spain have been covering the protests for most of the past week. In the last few days, this has also included coverage of similar protests building up in France and Belgium. HoM was asked by a right-leaning radio station to do a live interview on the subject to "explain the official Canadian government position", which we politely declined. Spain does not have a significant anti-vax movement, and there have not been any vaccine mandates here.. There is no copycat protest forming here, there haven't been political pronouncements on the Canadian protests, nor any private comments made.

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HAGUE (Feb 12): Freedom convoy protest arrives in The Hague. Inspired by protests in Ottawa and Paris, a freedom convoy of Dutch protesters arrived in The Hague Friday, including a number brandishing Canadian flags. The total number of protesters is unknown but is estimated at around 100 vehicles. Authorities have moved to end the protest. At present it remains unclear whether this will turn into a multi-day blockade of The Hague. PM Rutte has not yet commented on the situation. **s.38**

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WLGTV (Feb 11): The protests continued Friday night and Saturday, with media reporting anywhere from hundreds to thousands of people present. The police have struggled to remove vehicles as a number of tow companies have received threats, and as such, did not want to be involved. According to media reports, authorities have also considered using military assets, such as heavy haulage vehicles, to remove vehicles that are illegally parked. Some streets around Parliament, such as Molesworth St., remain blocked, with media reporting more than 100 trucks, campervans and cars blocking the road. Police are working with Wellington City Council to remove food trucks and limit the ability for people to bring food to the protestors, through the use of bylaws.

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NYT Editorial (Online Feb.10, Print version of Feb.13)

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The Ottawa Trucker Protests Are a Test of Democracy

Credit...Amru Salahuddin/Anadolu Agency, via Getty Images

By The Editorial Board

By the standards of mass [protests](#) around the world, the “Freedom Convoy” snarling Downtown [Ottawa](#) ranks as a nuisance. The number of protesters, [about 8,000 at their peak](#), is modest; there have been no serious injuries or altercations, the truckers stopped blaring their horns after residents got a temporary court injunction against them, and most Canadians support neither the truckers nor their cause. Yet what’s happening in Canada deserves close attention in the United States and across the world.

In an increasingly polarized political environment, the Canadian truckers became an instant cause célèbre. Donations poured in, prompting GoFundMe to pull the plug on the campaign after a few days [under a policy](#) that “prohibits the promotion of violence and harassment,” a void that was quickly filled by right-wing crowdfunding platforms. Copycat convoys [have appeared as far afield as Australia and New Zealand](#).

Inevitably, a chorus of cheers arose from south of the border, led by Donald Trump’s [declaration](#) that “the Freedom Convoy is peacefully protesting the harsh policies of far-left lunatic Justin Trudeau who has destroyed Canada with insane Covid mandates,” referring to the prime minister. Senator Ted Cruz [called](#) the Canadian truckers “heroes”; Elon Musk [tweeted](#), “Canadian truckers rule”; Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene [suggested](#) that the “corporate Communists” at GoFundMe should be arrested.

The raucous images from Canada, a country widely regarded as a model of calm, tolerance and reason, demonstrate the worrisome degree to which Covid-19 mandates and other regulations have become a potent, and perhaps lasting symbol, for the far right of what they see as governmental assaults on their “freedoms.” The Canadian truckers initially [launched their convoy](#) in late January to protest the requirement that those crossing the Canadian-U.S. border must be vaccinated to avoid a 14-day quarantine. That in itself was a minority cause — only [about a tenth](#) of cross-border drivers are not vaccinated, according to the Canadian Trucking Alliance, which disavowed the protest. (And [86 percent of Canadians](#) as a whole have received at least one shot.) A survey by the market research firm Leger found that [65 percent](#) of Canadians believe the Freedom Convoy represents only a “small minority of selfish Canadians.”

As the big rigs brought traffic to a crawl in the Canadian capital and began blaring their horns, Canadians who do not share their grievances began to call for an end to the protests. The Ottawa police chief [called it](#) a “siege,” the Ontario premier [said](#) it was an “occupation,” the Ottawa mayor declared a state of emergency, and on Monday, Mr. Trudeau angrily told Parliament that the protests [have to stop](#). He [stopped well short](#) of authorizing the use of military force against them but went as far as to say the protesters are “trying to blockade our economy, our democracy and our fellow citizens’ daily lives.”

We [disagree](#) with the protesters’ cause, but they have a right to be noisy and even disruptive. Protests are a necessary form of expression in a democratic society, particularly for those whose opinions do not command broad popular support. Governments have a responsibility to prevent violence by protesters, but they must be willing to accept some degree of disruption by those seeking to be heard. The challenge for public officials — the [same one faced by Minneapolis and other cities in 2020](#) — during the protests after the murder of George Floyd — is to maintain a balance between public health and safety and a functioning society, with the right to free expression. Entertaining the use of force to disperse or contain legal protests is wrong. [As Mr. Trudeau said in November 2020](#), in expressing his support of a yearlong [protest by farmers in India](#) that blocked major highways to New Delhi, “Canada will always be there to defend the right of peaceful protest.”

The convoy has captured an underlying frustration in a broad swath of the Canadian public. Like the [“gilets jaunes” \(yellow vests\) movement](#) in France that clogged the streets of Paris and other cities for months in late 2018 and early 2019, the Canadian truckers are [motivated by anger](#) over [a wide variety of grievances](#) that cannot be easily resolved through negotiations. Their power lies in their ability to disrupt through social media, using images of a few thousand people immobilizing a national capital and hampering international trade to mobilize global support.

The gilets jaunes, however, never found a cause with wide appeal. The Canadian truckers have, and their success in turning coronavirus restrictions into a rallying cry for the disaffected is what makes the Ottawa protest significant. In France, [a convoy of dozens of trucks](#) and other vehicles, inspired by the Ottawa protests, headed to Paris from southern France on Wednesday, prompting the police to announce a ban on such protests as a risk to public order. A U.S. group calling itself “Convoy to D.C. 2022” has announced an American version of the protest for next month, though Meta quickly removed the group’s page from Facebook for violating its policies on spreading vaccine misinformation.

These nascent efforts pose a challenge for Mr. Trudeau, President Biden and every other leader searching for ways to restore a degree of normalcy while maintaining defenses against a disease that still has the power to fill hospitals and kill in large numbers. Effective leadership in this stage of the pandemic means finding ways to confront the understandable frustrations and legitimate protests engendered by the pandemic without stoking more strife, compromising the rule of law or succumbing to unreasonable demands. With populists like Mr. Trump primed to attack any Covid-

19 action by the government as an assault on “freedom,” safely exiting the pandemic will be that much more treacherous. Allowing nonviolent, even if disruptive, protest is an important tool for maintaining social cohesion in a polarized society.

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Cc: *MINT-Dept Unit/Unité ministérielle <D-MINT-Dept-Unit@international.gc.ca>
Subject: REPORT: Teamsters denounce "Freedom Convoy" -- Recap of a week of blockades in Detroit

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Please find below a report from DTROT on a week of blockades, incl. the Detroit-Windsor Ambassador bridge.

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In addition to Governor Whitmer's statement which received broad coverage earlier this week, note the statement from Teamsters President Jim Hoffa 'denouncing' the so-called "Freedom Convoy" (pasted below).

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DTROT Weekly Advocacy Report: February 7-11, 2022

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Security and Border

Border Blockade

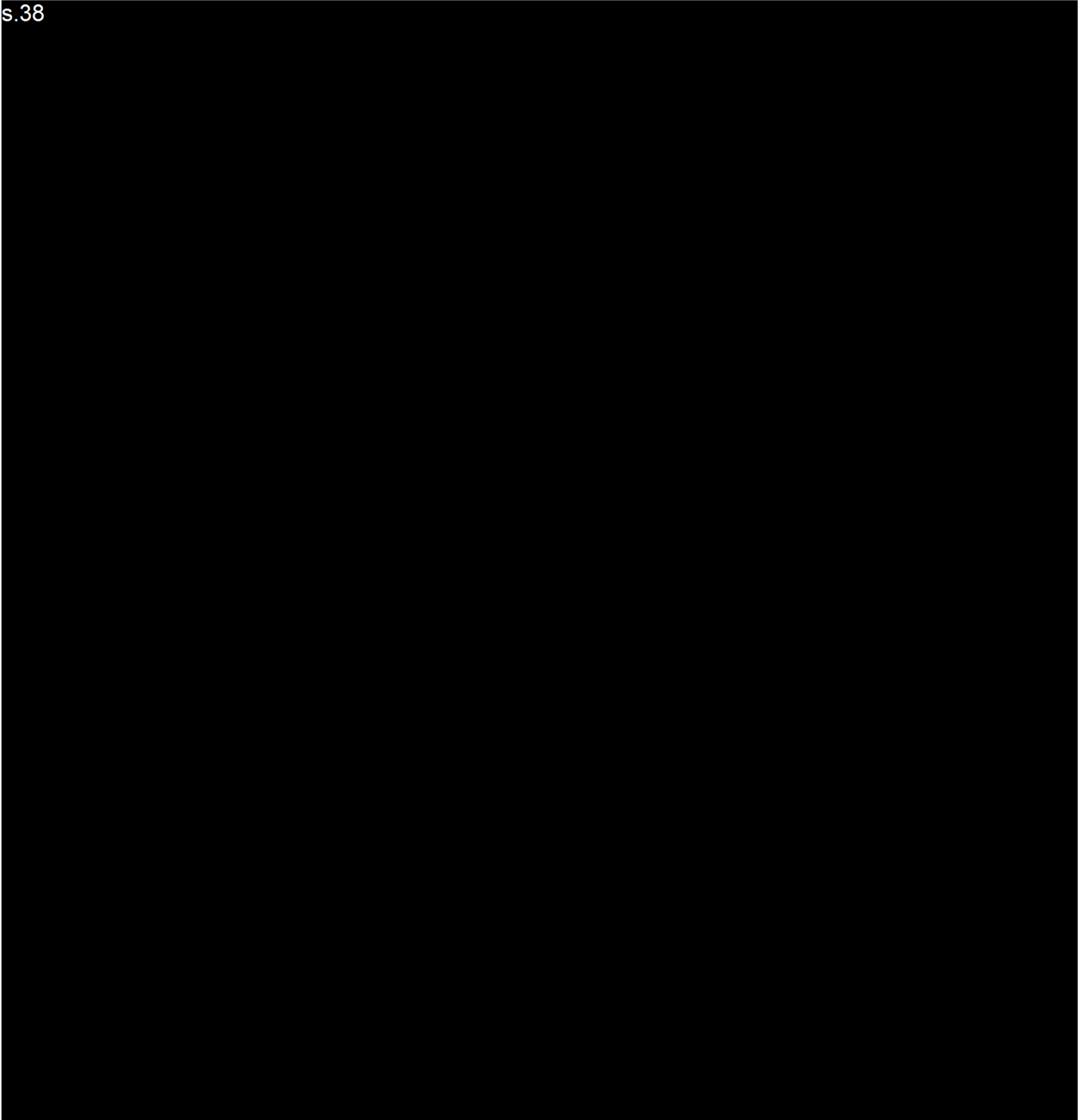
DTROT is engaging extensively with political and business interlocutors around the evolving conditions at two key Canada-US crossings, the Bluewater Bridge between Port Huron and Sarnia and the Ambassador Bridge between Detroit and Windsor. The Canadian blockades produced significant impacts in Michigan within hours and those impacts and voices calling for a resolution have grown steadily throughout the week. The first closure was on Sunday, February 6 when US-bound traffic was shut down at the Bluewater Bridge due to protests on Canada's Hwy 402. Outbound bridge traffic was closed for about 10 hours, re-opening Sunday evening. Since then traffic has moved at this crossing, however significant delays are being experienced, especially for Canada-bound traffic that is being rerouted from the Ambassador Bridge.

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On Monday, February 7, protesters descended on the roadways to and from the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, slowing then stopping traffic by about 7 p.m. Inbound traffic from the US has remained shut since then, although mid-day Friday brought media reports that one inbound lane may reopen. Outbound traffic to the US across the bridge has been significantly reduced and intermittently closed. In normal times, this bridge handles 7000 trucks per day, with many drivers making 2-3 turns per day, so the closure has produced severe congestion on the Michigan freeway system. As the closure lengthens, industry is reporting manufacturing production disruptions with companies, unions, trade associations issuing calls for a resolution. On Wednesday, February 9, **the Canada-US Business Association (CUSBA)** a Detroit-Windsor based group, published a [statement](#) signed by several dozen chambers and groups from both countries calling for a swift and immediate clearing of the Windsor-Detroit Ambassador Bridge blockade and a timely reopening of the bridge. On Thursday, February 10, the [Teamsters Union](#) denounced the blockade. Also on Thursday, Governor Whitmer [issued a statement](#) on the blockade, calling on Canada to re-open the border. Several Michigan elected officials have commented on social media expressing a range of sentiments. Earlier today, the city of Windsor ON has been granted a court injunction to put an end to the blockade of the

Ambassador Bridge. WSHDC & DTROT are coordinating on engagement with political and business stakeholders, as well as facilitating media engagement.

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Call with Detroit Regional Chamber February 10, 2022: HoM/Comartin met with Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce President Baruah and MichAUTO VP Stevens to encourage communication to membership and elected officials that Canada has been a reliable supply partner to the U.S. for energy, manufactured goods, agri-food and more and intends to continue for decades to come. He strongly discourages soundbites to the contrary. DRCC/Baruah committed to communicating to membership and government. HoM advised that all levels of government are working to end this

disruptive blockade. Baruah expects a parallel protest in the U.S. to commence as early as this weekend.

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Call with OESA & MEMA February 11, 2022: HoM/Comartin met with Original Equipment Suppliers Association (OESA) President Fream and parent Motor Equipment Suppliers Association (MEMA) Sr. VP Wilson to discuss the border blockade and the direct impacts to the automotive industry – OEMs and suppliers. HoM/Comartin advised that all levels of government are working to resolve this matter in a non-violent manner. He explained the injunction process. OESA/Fream asked about the likelihood that Prime Minister Trudeau would issue a state of emergency and was “shocked” that this is unlikely to happen. In an unofficial poll of about 60 OESA members, as of Feb. 10th 30% were already impacted by the border blockade and this will increase to at least 50% by Monday. OESA Canadian members already preparing force majeure measures. MEMA/Wilson shares HoM/Comartin concerns about mid to long term impacts of this disruption on Canadian supply chain and investment.. MEMA/OESA agreed to assist with communicating to membership and will include HoM/Comartin’s suggestions. MEMA/Wilson to meet with American Trucking Association (ATA) and share Canadian messaging and explain impacts of the protest to ATA members with the goal of discouraging members from supporting the blockade.

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<https://teamster.org/2022/02/teamsters-denounce-freedom-convoy-blockade-at-canadian-border/>
10/02/2022

WASHINGTON) – The following is the official statement of Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa regarding the ongoing blockade by the Freedom Convoy protest at the United States-Canada border.

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“The Teamsters Union denounces the ongoing Freedom Convoy protest at the Canadian border that continues to hurt workers and negatively impact our economy. The livelihood of working Americans and Canadians in the automotive, agricultural, and manufacturing sectors is threatened by this blockade.

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“Our economy is growing under the Biden Administration, and this disruption in international trade threatens to derail the gains we have made. Our members are some of the hardest workers in the country and are being prevented from doing their jobs. The Teamsters call on the organizers of this action to end this protest and instead, engage in meaningful political discourse with the Canadian government to find a solution.”

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